

Paul Cezanne, *Still Life*

Discussion Question

Style:

1. **What style did Cezanne use?**

Post-Impressionist

Cezanne painted in the **Post-Impressionist** style, with an emphasis on color and form rather than finished detail. He used the style of heavy brushstrokes that was typical of painters of his time.

2. **Why did Cezanne paint fruit?**

Still life

Cezanne, like other artists, loved to paint **still-life** compositions, such as flowers, fruits, or objects on a table. He could arrange them any way he wanted to make them seem alive. Still-life objects are easier to paint; they sit still. When Cezanne painted people, it made him angry when they moved. He would say to them, “Sit still like an apple.”

Design:

3. **Which fruit in this still life would Cezanne pick up to eat first?**

Composition

The lemon in this painting is the brightest fruit and attracts our attention first, but lemons are too sour to eat. It has fallen off the plate. Removing it would unbalance the picture. The orange at the center of the plate is bright and tempting, but if it were moved, the apple above it would roll down. This composition is carefully arranged and Cezanne can only paint it, not eat it.

4. **Is the composition balanced?**

Balance

Cezanne balanced the objects so each piece of fruit is important. They form a flat triangle on the round plate. Their round shapes are repeated in the round platter and jug. The bright fruits balance the large jug and make our eyes move around the painting. If the lemon or the jug were removed, the still life would no longer feel balanced.

5. **What main shape did Cezanne use to unify this painting?**

Unity

Cezanne gave unity to the composition by repeating a **round** shape for the fruit in the pitcher and its lip, the designs on the table cloth, the edge of the table, and the fruit bowl. A round chair back hides behind the pitcher.

6. **How do repeated shapes give rhythm?**

Repetition

Repeated round shapes give rhythm to the composition. Our eye moves easily from the pitcher to the fruit, to the bowl and table. If a different shaped fruit, like a banana, were placed in the bowl, it would interrupt the rhythm.

Lines:

7. How do the edges show form?

Contour

Cezanne painted curving, shaded **contour** lines to show the rounded edges of the fruit. He painted a dark outline surrounding the pitcher, and he added shading on its surface to give it form. The edge of the table is shown with a simple, flat outline.

Thick

Thick lines on the tablecloth and background are made with strong, even brushstrokes, repeated in patches of blue, gray, and green. They make a pattern in the background.

Thin

Thin, careful brush strokes add detail and texture to the fruits and background. They add highlights and shading to show form.

Color:

8. What are the main colors used by Cezanne?

Primary

Our eyes are attracted to the **primary** colors in the bright red apples, yellow lemon, blue pitcher, table cloth, and background. The blue background and red and yellow fruits dominate the painting. A red stripe on the blue pitcher's lip and handle contrasts with the blue, making us notice the pitcher. Bright red and yellow fruits attract our attention.

Secondary

Secondary colors are seen in the oranges, green apples, and violet shading on the pitcher. They add contrast and variety.

Warm

The **warm** colors of the fruit make them look delicious and tempting.

Cool

Cool colors in the background create a quiet mood, making the fruits livelier.

Shape:

9. How did Cezanne make the fruit on a flat canvas look round?

Form

The fruits are painted with curving brush strokes and highlights and shadows that give them form. The pitcher looks rounded because of the highlight on its middle and the dark shadows on its right-hand side. Highlights and shadows make the fruit and pitcher appear to pop out, as though they were 3-D.

10. How does light create form?

Light source

The **light source** is from the top left, behind the observer's left shoulder. This light hits the objects that stick out.

Highlights

Highlights shine on the green apple and the orange, the pitcher, and the rim of the bowl shine in the light, making them appear to project, or pop out from the flat canvas.

Shading

Dark **shading** on the lower side of the fruits, pitcher, and table cloth, show where the light doesn't reach. These shadowy areas appear to recede, or hide, making them appear farther away.

Texture:

11. How does texture make this painting more realistic?

Visual

The **visual texture** on the fruits looks rough, like the real texture of fruits. The rough textures of the drape and oranges contrast with the smooth surface of the green apple and the pitcher.